

## **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you and good morning, everyone.

I am honoured to be presenting at this Collaborative Forum hosted by the Alberta College of Family Physicians, and...

...to bring greetings on behalf of Premier Dave Hancock and Alberta's Minister of Health, Fred Horne.

This forum is a great way to bring policymakers, family physicians, hospital administrators, and other care providers together,...

...to work collaboratively on a common vision for the care of our aging population,...

...now and well into the future.

## **AGING POPULATION**

This is an exciting and challenging time to be a part of seniors care in Alberta.

Today, there are more than 460,000 seniors in our province,...

... and that number is expected to double in the next 20 years.

By 2033, we expect to have more than one million seniors calling Alberta home.

Alberta's seniors are more diverse and have higher expectations than at any other time in our history.

The great news is that people are living longer, more active and independent lives.

But this also means seniors are experiencing more complex health care needs as they age...

...which puts even more pressure on our family physicians, acute and continuing care systems.

For instance, about 40,000 Albertans suffer from dementia, and...

...roughly 8,000 are newly diagnosed each year.

The aging population means there will also be more cancers, diabetes, bone and joint diseases.

These challenges touch our lives on almost every level:

- As individuals caring for aging parents or grandparents,
- as communities wanting to see seniors and persons with disabilities thrive and enjoy a high quality of life, and...
- as physicians and care providers who give the highest level of care and compassion.

Together, we're all tasked with meeting the health care and service needs of Alberta's seniors' population...

...and we're meeting those needs together – through a variety of programs, services and housing options.

## **BUDGET 2014**

Alberta's health budget anticipates the needs of that diverse seniors' population with an increase of over \$600 million in 2014-2015

The \$18.3 billion health budget is an investment in families and communities...

...and reflects the priority that we place on health care,...

...giving Albertans access to the care they need, when and where they need it.

The 2014 health budget enhances primary health care, supports Alberta's seniors and young children, and helps our most vulnerable citizens.

To support Alberta's seniors, there is \$353 million budgeted in 2014-15 for the Alberta Seniors Benefit, an increase of \$21 million.

In addition, \$31 million has been budgeted for special needs assistance to low income seniors, for things like home repairs and medical expenses.

## **SENIORS ADVOCATE**

We know that meeting the needs of seniors today and tomorrow will require continued innovation and new ideas.

Our government is committed to working with seniors, care providers, staff and families to ensure they are included in modernizing our systems.

Seniors have told us they want one place where they can get help with the wide variety of services and supports provided in our health system.

I'm pleased to say our government has responded by establishing the first Seniors' Advocate in Alberta.

The Seniors' Advocate Office opened on April 1 and is helping seniors and their families navigate the health system and access government supports and services in a timely and efficient way.

Staff are also available to request inspections, investigations and quality and safety assessments.

The Seniors Advocate is part of the \$1.7 million budgeted in 2014 for the Office of the Health Advocates, which also includes the Mental Patient Health Advocate and Health Advocate.

## **DEMENTIA**

Our government is also keenly aware of the rising personal and financial costs of dementia and age-related brain diseases.

To tackle these challenges, we will need concerted action, not only within Alberta, but across Canada and worldwide.

At the provincial level, we support programs and research such as:

- The FirstLink program provided by the Alzheimer's Society of Alberta and the Northwest Territories;
- Collaborative research into dementia and age-related brain diseases through Campus Alberta Neuroscience; and
- the Aging Brain Care Pathway development work of the Seniors Strategic Clinical Network at AHS

Last December, Minister Horne attended the G8 Summit on Dementia in London.

This summit resulted in an international commitment to strengthen innovation, collaboration and research investments.

The declaration recognizes that co-operation and co-ordination are our best hopes for new treatments and eventually a cure.

We can see how this co-operative model might also be applied within Canada...

...particularly through federal-provincial-territorial initiatives related to health care and seniors.

I encourage you to stay aware of and support these new developments through your professional organizations and academic partnerships.

## **CONTINUING CARE**

We can't talk about seniors care without referencing continuing care.

This year, more than 109,000 Albertans will receive home care to assist with personal or medical needs and the majority of those are seniors.

These home care services are helping more Albertans maintain their independence and quality of life at home, and...

...are helping to alleviate some of the pressure on our acute care system.

For those who need a higher level of care, we've opened more than 3,000 new continuing care spaces over the past three years.

These new spaces mean that:

- more Albertans are getting the care they need closer to home, and

- more couples are staying together in our continuing care residences.

We're also realizing the tremendous potential of the campus of care model, which combines multiple levels of care at one location.

This is an exciting approach, and one that we expect to see more of in the future.

All of these recent developments have been made possible through consultation and partnerships with continuing care providers and the entire medical community.

And that consultation is ongoing.

## **CONTINUING CARE FORUM**

Under Minister Horne's leadership, we are also working towards a renewed continuing care policy for Alberta.

To guide that work, we've brought together a continuing care forum that is looking at all aspects of this important facet of elder care.

Members of the forum include representatives from:

- the Alberta Continuing Care Association,
- the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association, and
- the Seniors Housing Society of Alberta, and
- Alberta Health Services – and I'm pleased to acknowledge Dr. Jim Silvius, Provincial Medical Director, Seniors Health, AHS is a member of this forum and is in attendance today.

With input from this forum, clients, families, physicians and front-line staff, our goal is to build a system that:

- is easier for clients and families to access and understand;
- supports independence and a high quality of life; and
- provides the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I said at the outset, this is an exciting and challenging time for Alberta and for the thousands of doctors and other medical staff who care for our aging population.

This forum is precisely the type of ongoing dialogue the government needs to have with our partners...

...about how we can best meet the needs of our growing seniors' population – at home and in our communities.

Our collective goal is to build an elder care system that will be the envy of the nation.

This is a shared commitment, and your Alberta government is a partner on this journey.

Thank you.